

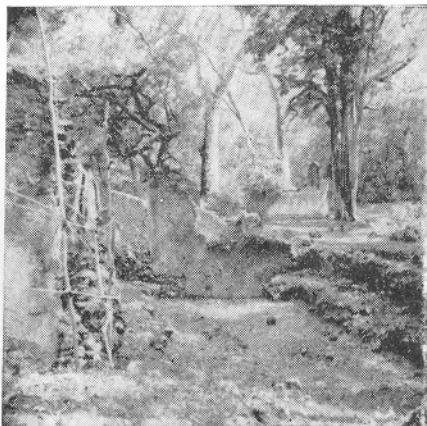
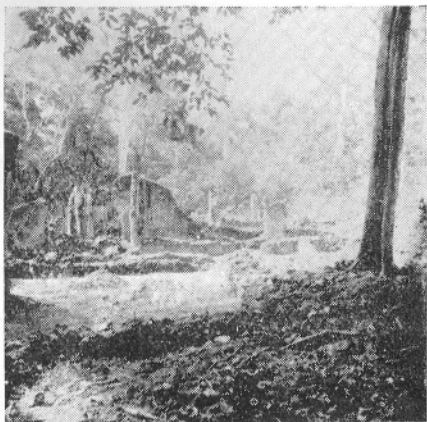
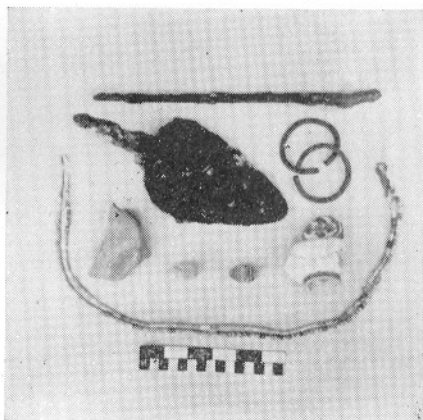
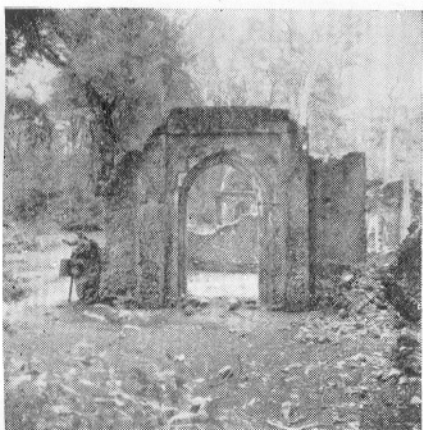
THE HOUSE OF THE DHOW.

by JAMES KIRKMAN.

The private houses of Gedi, lying between the Palace and the east boundary wall of the city, follow a standard plan consisting of a sunken forecourt and a long front room with doors leading into two suites of two rooms each. The structure known as the House of the Dhow, which was excavated last year, follows the traditional plan, but with the addition of an inner court. Part of this building goes back at least to the beginning of the period of rehabilitation of the city in the early 15th century. It remained in occupation until the end of the 16th century, when, from the absence of characteristic late ceramic types, it appears to have been abandoned, rather before the end of the life of the city. During this span of two hundred years it underwent alterations and additions, reflecting vividly the vicissitudes of a building lived in by generations, each with their needs and problems. Finally, as "the conclusion of the matter", the large tomb was built at the north-east corner of the building where the last owner rests undisturbed. This is the tomb of the Sharif Hasan Saidi bin Abdullah, incidentally the only tomb at Gedi with a name that has not been forgotten. There are traces of an inscription made in the wet plaster of the tomb, but they are now too worn to be legible. Below the house, traces of sub-structural occupation were found, similar to the sub-structural occupation below the mosque at Kilepwa.

The original house seems to have consisted of two series of rooms, but this building was soon converted into the characteristic Gedi house with the triple series of rooms. The entrance was at the south end of a long sunken court or "ukumbi" with a platform in front of the facade of the house. From the platform, doors led into the house and an inner court. At the other end of the long front room was a lavatory with a carefully plastered pit, 27 ft. deep, and a bench and seat for washing. Behind were two rooms, the last with internal pilasters at the outside corners and a platform raised about a foot from the ground, on which the sleeping mat would be laid. The inner court, which was used as the "haramlik", or women's salon, had also three rooms behind it.

This large house was subsequently converted into two by the blocking of the doorway between the courts, the opening of a doorway in the outer wall of the inner court, and the construction of another lavatory at the end of the front room. At the same time another residence was built, consisting of rear and side rooms taken from the old house, to which was added a long room with a narrow sunken court-yard in front of it. The single small bedroom of the new house has the sleeping platform and was entered originally by a door with a high sill which was reached by a wooden step. Other examples have been found at Gedi of this type of interior doorway, which was particularly approved for bedrooms. Behind



Views of Gedi and Some Recent Finds

this room was a chamber without a door, entered by a trap door below the ceiling, which was a store. These chambers with access from a bedroom exist in all the houses at Gedi, and it is probable that their primary purpose was to keep the bags of cowries which were the currency.

The new house was sandwiched between the large house described above and another house which has not been excavated. At the side of the new house is an open court or enclosure used as a store, or, less likely, as a lock-up for slaves at night. It is entered beneath a tall arch and on the inside is a platform about six inches above the main level of the court.

In the wet plaster of the walls of Rooms H and D rough pictures were incised. The sketches in Room H portraying kites and a bird, possibly an ostrich, are the artless scrawlings of children, of more interest to psychologists than archaeologists! But the third, on the wall of Room D, is a conscious work of art and is a recording of an actual event — the launching a dhow, perhaps the “*bon aventure*” that paid for the house. The picture has unfortunately deteriorated and the drawing has been made with the help of a photograph taken some years ago by Mr. Colin Campbell of Kericho.

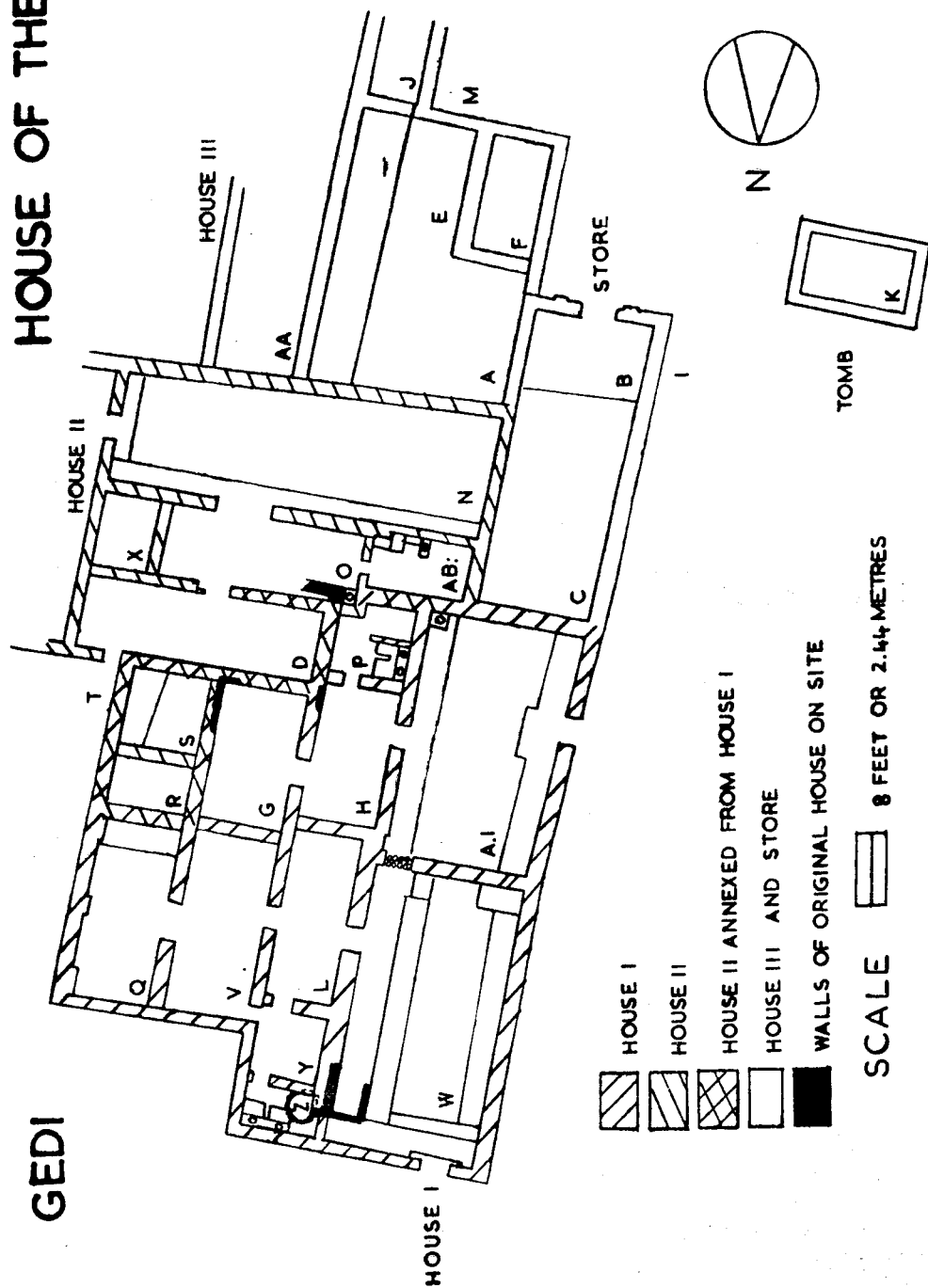
The roofs of the middle series of rooms and the lavatories Z and AB were of coral tiles; the other rooms seem to have had red earth and rubble roofs. This is contrary to the normal practice, which is to pay more attention to the outer than the inner rooms of the house.

The most interesting find archaeologically was the rim of a large bowl with both ribbed and incised decoration. This sherd came from a cutting outside the east wall of the inner court A.1, and belonged to the sub-structural level. It is the only sherd so far found at Gedi in which the ceramic features of the inhabitants of the Gedi area before the coming of the Arabs are combined with those of the new arrivals. In this level were also found sherds of a number of large-shouldered bowls and bowls with in-curved rims and a dark crimson paint on the inside, which were common at Kilepwa, but which have been scarce at Gedi.

Some of the finds are shown on Plate 8. At the top is an iron point, perhaps a fish-spear. Below this is a plasterer's trowel, which was found at the bottom of the lavatory shaft, and two copper bracelets. The trowel was made at latest in the 16th century; but would have caused little comment if seen in a mason's hand to-day! The two sherds of porcelain are: left, a sherd of a celadon dish with fish embossed on base; and right, a section from rim to base of a small blue and white bowl with a broad band of formal decoration below the rim. The pattern is outlined in dark blue, and it can be dated to the middle of the sixteenth century. The two ivory pommels between the sherds were found on the floor of Room H. The ivory necklace includes more than 150 beads, and came from the bottom of the lavatory shaft in Room Z. It must have been deliberately thrown in, perhaps to get somebody into trouble. There is no reason to suppose that “*fitina*” was any less common in the 16th century than it is today.

HOUSE OF THE DHOW

GEDI



GEDI

HOUSE OF THE DHOW

DRAWING INCISED IN PLASTER ON D/G WALL OF ROOM D OF HOUSE II

SCALE  1 IN. = 2.54 CM.

